



Consultations

a newsletter for the diplomatic and consular communities

Miami Opens New Regional Office

The Office of Foreign Missions, and Miami Regional Director Terry Daru, are pleased to announce the opening of permanent OFM quarters for the Miami region at: 95 Merrick Way, Suite 505, Coral Gables, FL 33134, (305) 442-4943. Conveniently located, this newest regional office has authority for the southeast, including Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia, as well as in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Long awaited, the facility now serves as the resource for OFM jurisdictional matters in this extended area. Add to that responsibility, liaison duties with city, state and federal offi-



Regional Director Terry Daru and Deputy Director Carolyn Parker Stand in front of the new OFM Miami Office; location starred on the map.

cials in all matters concerning the U.S. Department of State, as well as with police agencies at all levels in regard to consular immunities and Vienna Convention requirements for consular notification, plus its most

important task—as service center for the official foreign diplomatic community in the region—and a busy annual agenda can be predicted for personnel manning the new desks.

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Bookmark it ... <http://www.state.gov/ofm>

We're on the Web—check us out. Loaded with the information you need from the Office of Foreign Missions, you'll want to make <http://www.state.gov/ofm> your internet home page today!

Updated regularly, this new Web site is fresh and colorful, but more importantly, it is packed with current news and information of importance to your foreign mission and its personnel. You'll find the newest circular diplomatic notes, news of pilot projects, phone numbers and addresses. Want to download tax and



customs forms, or link to your OFM regional office? It's all just a click away.

One of a range of services OFM offers, this site has been developed in the hope that it will expedite your search for answers to questions affecting both your work and your personal life. By assisting, advising,

and regulating services for foreign diplomats, their dependents, and their staffs while they reside in the United States, OFM seeks to promote and strengthen the relationship between governments.

Hosted by the Department of State, you will find, in addition to all the OFM facts you might be looking for, a knowledge base for many other government services at www.state.gov. ♦

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Social Security Numbers and Diplomats



OFM provides the following guidance to clarify an issue on which frequent questions are received. This information is supplied by the Social Security Administration, the agency responsible for administering the U.S. Social Security Program.

Principal Diplomatic Officials:

Individuals who enter the United States on A-1, A-2, G-1, and G-4 visas are eligible to apply for and receive a social security number (SSN). Such an individual must present evidence of his/her age, identity, and lawful alien status (I-94) at a Social Security Office in order to apply for the social security number.

Dependents of Diplomatic Officials:

The spouse and other authorized dependents of a diplomatic official can obtain an SSN only if they are employed as authorized by the new Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS). A BCIS employment authorization document must be obtained before applying for a Social Security Number. If a dependent needs a number in a format similar to a social security number for some reason besides employment, he/she may apply for a taxpayer identification number from the U. S. Internal Revenue Service.

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To Apply in the Washington, D. C. region ...

A foreign diplomatic official who would like to obtain a social security number must apply *in person* at the **Washington Social Security Office at 2100 M Street, NW, Washington, DC.**

He or she must bring the following documents.

1. Proof of Immigration Status: Bring the BCIS document issued at the time of arrival in the United States for the beginning of his/her tour. This is typically a Form I-94, but can also be a Form I-551, I-668B or I-766.

2. Proof of Age and Identity: Bring a passport or original birth certificate, in English.

At the M Street office, the diplomat must fill out Form SS-5, application for a social security number. After the completed forms are verified by the clerk, it will take 7 to 10 days to generate a social security number.

The number will be mailed to the individual at the address listed on the SS-5, so a normal period for mail delivery must also be allowed. If the application is incomplete, or investigation is needed, the process may be delayed.

The procedure outlined above will be the same at all Social Security offices in the United States. Diplomatic officials stationed outside the Washington, D.C., area should consult their telephone directories for the address of their nearest Social Security office. They may also call the Social Security Administration's toll-free number, 800-772-1213, and enter their ZIP code at the correct prompt.



Obtaining Your Driver License

Obtaining a driver license in the United States not only allows you to drive legally, but it also serves as a major form of personal identification. OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicles Program is the sole licensing authority for diplomats, consular officers and dependents, posted to the United States. Foreign licenses may be used for only 30 days after the holder's entry. Newcomers are often surprised to find just how much driving is an essential part of American life.

Q. *Who may apply for a Department of State Driver License?*

A. Diplomats, consular officers, administrative and technical staff, some service staff who enjoy privileges and immunities, and dependent family members may apply. U.S. citizens, permanent residents or local hires may not.

Q. *What services does the driver license section of the Department of State provide?*

A. As a part of the OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicles (DMV) program, the Driver Services Unit issues driver licenses and maintains drivers' records.

Licenses are issued to eligible foreign mission members and their dependents who are of legal driving age contingent upon the following:

- The applicant must provide proof and/or certification that he/she possesses the minimum level of driving knowledge, and the experience necessary, to operate a motor vehicle safely and in accordance with U.S. driving practices and laws. Members who do not meet the minimum driving skills will first be required to pass a written exam and an on-the-road test. All applicants must provide proof of adequate visual acuity.

- First-time applicants are required to pass a vision test, and obtain a learner's permit by passing a written examination, in the state in which they reside. During the permit period, they are also required to complete a state-approved drivers' education program. Upon completion of all permit requirements, including the education program, the certifying state agency will administer an on-road driving skills test. This state agency is usually the state's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The results need to be forwarded to OFM, and if satisfactory, the driving license will then be issued by the Department of State's OFM Driver Services Unit.

Q. *Are mission members with privileges and immunities, and their dependents, eligible to apply locally for a driver license?*

A. OFM/DMV is the only driver license issuing authority for foreign mission personnel and their dependents. Therefore, although a learner's permit is obtained

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through the local jurisdiction, only OFM/DMV can issue the license after the requirements have been completed.

Q. How do I apply for a driver license?

A. Mission members applying for a driver license should follow the current application procedures:

1. Obtain and complete Form DS-1972: "Driver License and Tax Exemption Card Application." (Applications should be typewritten. Avoid strikeouts and type-over corrections. Please be aware that by making such corrections, the state motor vehicle testing administration has the right to reject the application and deny test services.)
2. Follow the appropriate set of instructions below *before* contacting the local DMV for testing or permit.
3. The applicant's local test results are to be noted on the DS-1972, in the test certification section.
4. The completed application should be submitted for processing to the OFM/DMV.

For an applicant who possesses a valid driver license:

- Attach a copy of a valid home country driver license, or valid U.S. state driver license to the application, as well as the Mission's seal.
- Submit the application to OFM/DMV to determine which, if any, tests will be required, and request that the Department of State certification stamp be affixed, signed and dated. (*Continue with #3 above.*)

For an applicant without a valid driver license:

- Submit the application, with the Mission's seal, to OFM/DMV to have the Department of State certification stamp affixed to the application, signed and dated *before* obtaining testing. (*Continue with #3 above.*)

Q. Where may members complete their necessary test certifications?

A. Members requiring vision, written, drivers' education and/or road certification testing are required to complete the necessary tests *in the state in which they reside*. The Department of State has arranged to have test services provided at local Motor Vehicle Offices.

The vision exam (only), is available at two OFM locations:

OFM/New York Regional Office	OFM/DMV
15 United Nations Plaza	3507 International Place
N.W. New York, NY	Washington, D.C.

Q. What forms of identification will I need to receive testing?

A. It is important that the Mission's seal and OFM/DMV certification stamp is affixed on the Form DS-1972: Driver License Application *before* requesting testing from local state offices. Mission members *not* accredited with the U.S. Office of Protocol need a valid Passport with the I-94. Office of Protocol accredited members may use their Diplomatic Identification Card.

Q. How do non-eligible foreign mission members who are permanent residents, or local hire staff, obtain a driver license?

A. Personnel without privileges may request, in writing, that the Department issue a letter of non-eligibility certifying that status to the local vehicle administration. Non-eligible members then should apply in their resident state, meeting those requirements. The Department of State does not have jurisdiction to intercede with state regulations.

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New Faces:



OFM Director Douglas Dobson

Douglas Dobson has been selected as the first director of the Office of Foreign Mission's new Houston Regional Office.

A career foreign service officer since 1984, he was most recently posted as Management Officer at the American Embassy in Skopje, Macedonia. His previous overseas postings include Bolivia, Honduras, Croatia, Brazil, and Bermuda. Mr. Dobson also served as a regional affairs officer in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism in Washington, D.C.

A 1973 graduate from the Navy ROTC program at Marquette University, he served on active duty with the U.S. Navy from 1973–1979. Mr. Dobson's foreign languages are Spanish, Portuguese, and Serbo-Croatian. He is the recipient of the Department of State's Superior Honor Award and two Meritorious Honor Awards.

The new Houston Regional Office will eventually serve consular missions in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and New Mexico. The office opened in September 2003, with temporary office space provided by the Houston International Protocol Alliance at City Hall. Planned early activities include establishing contact with members of the consular corps throughout the region, and outreach to local government and law enforcement agencies. Routine OFM services will continue to be provided for the time being by the Chicago and Los Angeles Regional Offices.

Mr. and Mrs. Dobson have four grown daughters and one grandson. In his free time, Mr. Dobson enjoys playing tennis and golf. He hopes to be active in civil aviation during his posting in Houston.

Mr. Dobson can be contacted in Houston by phone (713) 437-5200, fax (713) 437-5292, or email ddobson@ghcvb.org. ♦

Where are you @ ...

Last issue we introduced our new look. This issue we have another announcement to make: *Consultations* is going electronic! That's right, you will now have your issue of this helpful tool delivered directly to your email address. This means advantages for you—for instance, you will be getting all the news in a more timely manner. No more waiting for the long delivery time from printer to mailbox. You will also be able to print out, or even simply forward, the issue for distribution to as many of your mission's personnel as you may want. You can also send a particular article to a staff member simply by cutting and pasting. Of course, you can always request a hard copy of the issue, or even of recent past issues, from your regional office of OFM. But there is one important requirement. We need to know where you are. **PLEASE email your updated email address to us at Consultations@state.gov.** Include the email address of any member of your Mission that you would also like to have receive *Consultations* directly.

Driver's Application Definitions:

Driver License—a document issued by a duly authorized government agency that permits an individual to operate motor vehicles of one or more classes in that jurisdiction and is neither expired, under suspension/revocation, or cancelled/voided.

U.S. Driver License— a license issued by one of the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam or the Department of State.

Home Country Driver License—a license issued by the country of which the bearer is a national.

Third Country Driver License—a license issued by a country other than the bearer's home country or the U. S.

International Driving Permit (IDP)—a multilingual document, normally issued by a touring club, translating a valid home country driver license into a standardized format so that the bearer may operate a vehicle internationally without having to obtain a driver license in each country visited. An IDP is *not* a valid permit to drive, but *must* be carried with a valid home country license. (*Note: Mission members posted to the U.S., and their bona fide dependents, do not engage in international road traffic.*)

Letter of Non-Eligibility—a letter issued by OFM/DMV to the local motor vehicle administration certifying that an individual is not eligible to receive a driver license issued by the Department of State. That being the case, the individual may test to receive a license directly from the local DMV. ♦



Social Security, continued from page 2



For utility services and gas tax-exempt credit cards, it is sufficient for the household if the diplomatic official alone has a social security number.

The United States Social Security Administration suggests that anyone who is not a principle diplomatic official, and is asked for a social security number in a non-employment context, explain that he/she is not legally entitled to get one and does not need it. The Social Security Administration advises that, apart from employment matters, no one can be denied processing or benefits just because he/she does not have a social security number. For example, if a dependent of a diplomatic official applies for college admission and/or college financial assistance, that dependent cannot be denied processing for admission or for financial aid only because he/she does not have a social security number.

In cases like the example above, the diplomatic dependent can request a letter from the Office of Foreign Missions verifying that he/she is unable to obtain a social security number. To ask for such a letter, contact **Mr. Edmond A. McGill, Office of Diplomatic Tax and Customs Programs, OFM, Washington, D. C., 20252. The telephone number is 202-895-3618.** ♦

Miami, continued from page 1

Miami Opens...

The official foreign community in the southeast region includes 78 career consulates with nearly 1,700 officials and their family members, 195 honorary consuls, and 200 employees of miscellaneous foreign government offices such as trade and tourism. To better serve these individuals, **Deputy Director Carolyn Parker**, a seasoned OFM administrator from Washington, D.C., has been recruited.

Ms. Parker will focus on assisting consular personnel, and their family members, with a range of services, including driver licenses and vehicle tags, tax exemption cards, and duty-free importing of goods. OFM Miami is presently conducting reviews of all consular staffing in its region to ensure properly documented vehicle registrations and driver licenses. By routing applications for such documents through the Miami Regional Office, consular personnel in the region avoid considerable waits for processing. ♦

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To contact any one of the above, email to their attention at OFMquestions@state.gov



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